

To the Editor:

For the past year, I have served as Chair of the national Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT). ACCT is a non-profit educational organization, representing more than 6,500 elected and appointed trustees who govern over 1,200 community colleges and affect the lives of 11 million students. ACCT has worked hard to give a strong voice as to the critical role that trustees play in addressing community college issues.

These have been challenging times for community colleges; we have simultaneously experienced double-digit enrollment increases, significant decreases in state fiscal support, and increased competition. In October, it was refreshing to watch the U.S. government eagerly acknowledge the role that Parkland College and the entire community college system play in training America's workers, building and supporting its middle class, and generating sustained economic prosperity for its many communities.

The first-ever White House Summit on Community Colleges brought together policymakers, business leaders, and college administrators, faculty, students, and trustees. As one of two active trustees at the summit, I was invited because of my role as Chair of ACCT and because of Parkland College's role as a leader in online education in Illinois.

While the summit did not provide quick fixes to the economic situation that students and community colleges face, the Obama administration plans to announce the first \$500 million of a \$2 billion investment in community colleges. This federal investment will support training to help Americans re-enter the job market.

Discussions at the state and national levels are putting more focus on community college student retention/completion, student success, and how success should be measured. Meanwhile, we continue to examine what we're doing here at home to help Parkland College be an important and valuable resource for our local communities.

Yours for a stronger workforce,  
Thomas M. Bennett  
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